



1942

# Thomas Cromwell and the Policies of Henry VIII, 1529-1536

Leonard Gittings  
*Loyola University Chicago*

## Recommended Citation

Gittings, Leonard, "Thomas Cromwell and the Policies of Henry VIII, 1529-1536" (1942). *Master's Theses*. Paper 192.  
[http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc\\_theses/192](http://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/192)

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact [ecommons@luc.edu](mailto:ecommons@luc.edu).



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).  
Copyright © 1942 Leonard Gittings

THOMAS CROMWELL AND THE POLICIES OF HENRY VIII, 1529-1536

By

LEONARD GITTINGS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
IN LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

JUNE

1942

## VITA

Leonard Gittings was born in Aberdare, Wales, April 28, 1904. He received his early education at the Aberdare High School and the Aberdare School of Mining Engineering.

In August, 1925, he was graduated from the London Bible and Missionary Training School, and in March, 1926, sailed for Africa, where he spent ten years in missionary work among the Baluba and Basonge tribes of the Belgian Congo. During this period he translated the New Testament into the Songe dialect.

He received his diploma from the Belgian School of Tropical Medicine, Bruxelles, in May, 1931.

During the past five years he has served as a Baptist pastor in the city of Chicago. In May, 1938, he received the degree of Bachelor of Theology from the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary of Chicago. He has devoted time to graduate study at the University of Chicago and Loyola University.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Almost immediately after the fall of Cardinal Wolsey and the subsequent entry of Thomas Cromwell into the service of Henry VIII, the King underwent a sudden and complete change in his attitude towards the problem of his Divorce and his relationship with the Roman Catholic Church. He adopted measures calculated to bring about a break with the Pope, taking each new step with increasing boldness. From a condition of hesitancy he passed to one of almost reckless opposition to some of the most cherished traditions of England and of Europe, and he succeeded in having these new measures accepted in his own realm. His attitude and experience up to 1529 give us no reason to expect any sudden change of policy on his part, so that the appearance of Thomas Cromwell on the scene at the crucial moment of Wolsey's fall, coupled with the adoption of new and radical measures by the King, would lead us to believe that Cromwell was the originator of these new schemes as well as the agent by whom they were later executed. In this paper, therefore, we have set for ourselves the task of discovering the extent to which Cromwell inaugurated and promoted the break with Rome, especially in those matters pertaining to the Divorce, the Suppression of the Clergy, and the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE MAN CROMWELL . . . . .	1
Ancestry - Early years - Youthful character - Roving Soldier - Personal description - Idealistic descrip- tions of Foxe and Froude - His attitude towards re- ligion - Machievellian principles - Cardinal Pole and Cromwell - Stow on Cromwell - His domestic life.	
II. THE CARDINAL'S SECRETARY . . . . .	15
Cromwell returns from the Continent - Cloth-mer- chant, wool-dyer, and lawyer - Introduction to Wol- sey - The Parliament of 1523 - Monetary and pol- itical principles - Evaluations of his speech - His climb to prominence - Wolsey's Colleges - Suppression of the lesser monasteries - Hatred of Cromwell - His ability as an administrator - His growing power.	
III. THE KING'S MINISTER . . . . .	30
The Divorce recalled to Rome - The Fall of Wolsey - Cromwell's danger - His interview with the King - His defence of Wolsey - Cromwell enters the King's service - Sudden change in Henry's attitude - Crom- well and the Divorce - Cromwell and the supremacy - Bringing pressure upon the Pope - Death of Wolsey - Cromwell supreme in the King's councils - Dealings with the clergy - 'Supplication of the Commons' - 'Submission of the Clergy' - The Annates Bill - Cromwell and Protestantism - Relations with Tyndale - Henry marries Anne Boleyn - Cranmer grants the Divorce - Cromwell all-powerful - Visitation of the Monasteries - Cromwell's agents - Fisher and More - Acts of Dissolution.	
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION . . . . .	73
BIBLIOGRAPHY	

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN CROMWELL

"Who is this Cromwell that has grown to such importance?" wrote Granvelle to his friend Chapuys the Imperial ambassador in England. In reply Chapuys writes as follows:

He is the son of a farrier in Chelsea, who is buried in the parish church there. His uncle, father of Richard Cromwell was cook to the Archbishop of Canterbury. This Thomas Cromwell was wild in his youth, and had to leave the country. He went to Flanders and to Rome. Returning thence he married the daughter of a wool merchant, and worked at his father-in-law's business. After that he became a solicitor. Wolsey finding him diligent and a man of ability for good or ill, took him into service and employed him in the suppression of religious houses. When Wolsey fell he behaved extremely well. The King took him into his secret Council. Now he is above everyone, except the Lady, and is supposed to have more credit than ever the Cardinal had. He is hospitable and liberal, speaks English well, and Latin, French, and Italian tolerably.<sup>1</sup>

This appears to be a fair and accurate summary of the life of Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, whose influence was such a dominant and sinister thing during the fourth decade of sixteenth century England. But it will be necessary for us to attempt to fill in a little more detail in the picture of this man's life.

---

<sup>1</sup> Chapuys to Granvelle, Nov. 21, 1535. Calendar, Foreign and Domestic, ix, No. 289.

While Innes in his England Under the Tudors remarks that the evidence of the early life of Cromwell is "scanty and inconclusive," a few rays of light have penetrated the obscurity of the years up to 1520. Several scattered items of documentary evidence enable us to trace his origins and earlier years. He was born about 1485 in Putney in Surrey, near London, being the son of Walter Cromwell, a brewer, smith, and fuller of that township. The family can be traced back to a certain "Ralph Lord Cromwell," who is described as one of the richest men of the fifteenth century.<sup>1</sup> An entry in the State Papers speaks of "Ralph late Lord Cromwell" as a former treasurer of the exchequer. Ralph had a son named William, who in turn was the father of John Cromwell, the grandfather of our Thomas. It was this John who brought the family from Norwell in Nottinghamshire to Wimbledon near London. The manorial records show that John Cromwell lived at Wimbledon with his brother-in-law, William Smyth, an armourer. There is reason for believing that John's son, Walter, was apprenticed to Smyth during his younger days, and was, therefore, sometimes called Walter Smyth.<sup>2</sup>

Walter Cromwell appears to have been a quarrelsome and riotous character. He was frequently drunk, and in 1477 a penalty of <sup>v</sup>tenty pence was inflicted on him for "assaulting

-----  
2. Thorold Rogers, Hist. of Agriculture and Prices. IV, 3.  
3. Merriman, Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell. I, 3.

and drawing blood" from a certain Thomas Michell. He and his father were very often brought before the courts on the charge of "over-burthening the public land in Putney with their cattle, and of cutting more than their fair share of the furze and thorns that grew there. An entry in the Court Rolls of Wimbedon Manor in the reign of King Edward IV states that Walter Smyth(Cromwell) and his father kept thirty sheep on Putney Common, "where they have no common."<sup>4</sup> Between 1475 and 1501 Walter was on forty-eight different occasions forced to pay a fine of sixpence for breaking the "assize of ale."<sup>5</sup>

We know nothing of Walter Cromwell's wife except that she was the aunt of a man named Nicholas Glossop, of Wirksworth in Derbyshire.<sup>6</sup> There were three children from the marriage: Katherine, the eldest, who was born about 1477; Thomas, the subject of our study; and Elizabeth, the youngest. Elizabeth married a farmer named Wellyfed, and a son from the marriage, Christopher, was later a fellow student and companion of Thomas Cromwell's son, Gregory, at the University of Cambridge.

-----  
<sup>4</sup> Merriman, I, 1.

<sup>5</sup> In each parish an official ale-taster checked the ale that was brewed there. Walter did not obtain this officials' sanction before drawing his ale, and so was fined.

<sup>6</sup> Calendar, VI, No.696.



A few items of information concerning the youth of Thomas Cromwell may be gleaned from the Italian novelist Bandello and from the Ecclesiastical History of John Foxe the martyrologist, both of whom Merriman looks upon as trustworthy sources for some of the incidents connected with Cromwell's early life.<sup>7</sup> The information we glean from these two writers confirm the charge made by Chapuys that the boy Thomas was ill-behaved. While he was still in his teens he quarreled with his father and left home to become a roving soldier in the French service. He followed the campaigns in Italy, and Cardinal Pole says he fought in the battle of Garigliano, December 28, 1503.<sup>8</sup> It was doubtless at this time he first became familiar with the Italian language and at the same time developed a taste for Italian culture that remained with him through life.

After leaving his soldiering he still remained on the Continent, where he was probably engaged as a clerk or merchant. About 1512, however, he returned to England, and soon afterwards married Elizabeth Wykys, a woman of some property, daughter of a well-to-do wool merchant. This alliance was particularly favorable to one of his talents, for it provided him with some capital with which to work.

-----

<sup>7</sup> Merriman, I, 9-12

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

At this point it would be wise to introduce a description of the future Earl of Essex. As to his personal appearance, there is preserved of him a picture which hangs in the Bodleian Library. This picture enables us to form some idea of his physical characteristics. He was a man of rather short stature, yet strongly built. His face was large, and dull, with a small, cruel mouth, which was surmounted by an exceptionally long upper lip. His eyes, which were gray, carried a restless expression, and were set closely together under light eyebrows. He was awkward in his gait, and in general had the appearance of being a patient, plodding, almost stupid man.<sup>9</sup> This, of course, was not the true impression of the man, and Chapuys has given us a number of shrewd descriptions and evaluations of Cromwell's physical and mental qualities in his letters to Charles V. In these epistles the Imperial ambassador indicates that Cromwell possessed great mobility of countenance, and in conversation his heavy face would light up, taking on a subtle, intelligent, and cunning aspect. He could be a pleasant conversationalist and entertainer, and was no mean wit whenever it pleased him to be so. One characteristic habit was the using of a "roguish, oblique glance" when he made any striking remark in the presence of others. It seemed

-----

<sup>9</sup> Merriman, I, 84-88.

easy for him to be either cruel or flattering, and Chapuys says that he could disarm the most experienced politician, being extremely adept as well as unscrupulous in the wiles of statecraft.

Although Cromwell was a plebian by birth he developed a keen aristocratic taste in many things. He was very fond of beautiful things, as as soon as his wealth permitted, he spent large sums of money in procuring rare samples of the works of the goldsmith and the jeweller.<sup>10</sup> Stephen Vaughn, who was his friend and agent in Antwerp, was more than once called upon to advance considerable sums of money for the purpose of obtaining rare works of art which Cromwell wished to have sent to him in England.<sup>11</sup> When he entertained his friends he was a magnificent host, spending money lavishly. For the King and court he sometimes provided the most elaborate masks, shows, and other spectacles. He would also spend money freely on his personal pleasures and pursuits, and on occasions seems to have lost sums as high as thirty pounds in such pastimes as cards, dice, and bowls.<sup>12</sup> In 1529, just before his rise to power, he made a will, and the list of his personal possessions gives ample evidence of his fondness for display and for -----

<sup>10</sup> Gasquet, Henry VIII and the English Monasteries, 152  
<sup>11</sup> Cal. IV, Nos. 6744, 6754  
<sup>12</sup> Gasquet, 152.

ornate furnishings.

Increase of wealth did not, however make Thomas Cromwell generous. In fact, John Checkynge, who was tutor to Cromwell's son Gregory and to his nephew Christopher Welfed at the University of Cambridge wrote to the future Vicar-General complaining of the slowness with which the school expenses of the boys were paid. Cromwell resented the tutor's reminders of the need for financial aid, and wrote a taunting letter reproaching Checkynge for "not having done well to his folks."<sup>13</sup>

Foxe, and, following him, Froude have idealised the character of Cromwell, but historians in general have found little to commend in him. Foxe bepraises Cromwell's "integrity, goodness and piety," and even designates him as "the valiant soldier of Christ," but Cromwell's own private papers are sufficient evidence against such a description of him. Whatever religion he may have had, it had little influence upon his life and conduct. Maitland says of him: "The Lord Cromwell was the patron of the ribaldry, and the protector of the ribalds, of the low jester, the filthy ballad-monger, the alehouse singers."<sup>14</sup> His brutal treatment of Elizabeth Barton, the "Holy Maid" of Kent, and her followers is one of the most powerful commentaries upon his

-----  
<sup>13</sup> The correspondence between Cromwell and Checkynge is illuminating and entertaining. See Cal. IV, Nos 4314, 4433, 5757, 6219, 6722.

<sup>14</sup> English Reformers 236

"goodness and piety." He could, when making his will in 1529, make bequests to the five orders of Friars in London and to poor prisoners in Newgate and other prisons, and also arrange to have priests and "poor householders" hired to pray for his soul. But when it came to dealing with religion in everyday life, he viewed it purely from the point of expediency. Yet in a crisis he used religion and religious exercises as a kind of refuge. For example, Cavendish records that at the time of Wolsey's fall in 1529 he came across Cromwell in the Great Chamber at Esher, "leaning in the great windowe with a Primer in his hand, saying our Lady matins," while he prayed and wept copiously. "This," says Cavendish, "was very rare in him."<sup>1</sup> There would seem to be little doubt that this lay ecclesiastic was neither an ardent Catholic nor a honest Protestant. First and foremost he was a politician, a man who "seemed to possess all the requirements of the versatile favourite of a monarch not overnice in his tastes."<sup>2</sup>

Cromwell's unscrupulousness with reference to bribes is well known. Even Froude has to admit that "in Cromwell the questionable practice of most great men of his time - the practice of receiving pensions and presents for

-----

<sup>15</sup> Cavendish, Life of Wolsey, 169.

<sup>16</sup> S.H.Burke, Men and Women of the Reformation, II, 101.

general support and patronage - was carried to an extent which, even then, perhaps, appeared excessive." 17 The private records of Cromwell contain numerous references to such gifts, and there is no doubt about the fact that the "good Thomas" reaped a very substantial amount of personal gain from his activities as secretary to Wolsey and minister of Henry VIII.

One of the most important factors for us to understand in examining the policies of Henry and Cromwell, is the view of the latter respecting the principles by which a minister should govern his relationships with the ruler he serves. The testimony of Cardinal Pole in this matter is therefore worth quoting at length:

Some time after my return from Italy, I met him [Cromwell] in the Cardinal of York's palace, in whose service he was ... and he fell into a discourse upon the necessary qualifications of those who are called to the Councils of Princes. His motive, I suppose, was to sift me concerning the Divorce, which was then dividing the Privy Council. My answer was, that I thought it the duty of every such person ... to advise what was most conducing to his Prince's honour and interest ... He replied that these notions were very plausible when delivered in the Schools or from the Pulpit, but were of very little use in the Cabinets of Kings; and if much insisted upon, instead of being favourably heard, would create hatred and aversion to the Adviser ... From whence he concluded, that the chief concern of a person in this station should be to study his Prince's inclinations, in which much sagacity was required, as they sometimes be dis-

---

17 History of England, III, 444.

guised under appearances of a very different import: that it became Kings to use the specious names of religion, equity and other virtues, though their designs were not always regulated by them: that true ability lay in discovering what those real intentions were; and then, in managing affairs in such sort as they might obtain their ends, and yet no open failure in religion or probity by observed: and that this ability was seen in proportion as the minister could reconcile the appearances of virtue, which Princes were unwilling to give up, with the substantial interest of the state. That this was a compendious way to secure favor and authority with them, and to be useful to one's own self and others ... This was the sum of Cromwell's discourse, which was long. 18

Pole goes on to say that he made no reply to "barefaced impiety," but said to Cromwell that he supposed he spoke only for argument's sake. Cromwell, however, took nothing back, and attributed Pole's astonishment to lack of knowledge in public affairs, and to his strict training in the schools. He further said that he had a book which he would send to Pole, if he would read it. The future cardinal promised to do so, but Cromwell never sent it to him. Later Pole procured a copy of the recommended work, hoping it would help him to understand the motives and character of Cromwell when he commenced to direct the policies of Henry VIII. Pole's reaction to the volume is interesting:

On reading it, I found, in effect, every stragem by which religion, justice, and good faith were to be defeated, and every human

and divine virtue become a prey to selfishness, dissimulation, and falsehood. It was by one Machiavel ... and entitled, On the Art of Government; and is such a performance, that was Satan himself to leave a Successor, I do not well see by what other maxims he would direct him to reign.<sup>19</sup>

It would appear that Cromwell must have had the celebrated treatise of Machiavelli, "The Prince" in manuscript form, for it was not published until three or four years later than the time indicated by Cardinal Pole.<sup>20</sup> Cromwell's reason for not sending the work was probably due to the fact that Pole had so clearly shown that he did not relish such questionable political and moral principles. Undoubtedly Pole also discerned considerable danger to himself and his group if ever such a man as Thomas Cromwell should become a dominant figure in the councils of Henry VIII. When, therefore, it became known that Cromwell was really to take the place of Cardinal Wolsey as the King's chief adviser, Pole, early in 1532, left England for the Continent, realising at the outset, what later became very manifest, that there was no room in the realm of King Henry for both a Pole and a Cromwell. It is not, <sup>to</sup> be wondered at that the cardinal called Cromwell the "Emissary of Satab."

Innes has summed up the idea generally held by almost all historians concerning the political principles by which Cromwell directed his course in the following sentence :

-----

<sup>19</sup> See Thos. Phillips, Life of Reginald Pole , 42-45  
<sup>20</sup> Dictionary of National Biography, V, 198.



"Whether or not Thomas Cromwell learnt his political principles as an adventurer in Italy, he became the living embodiment of those doctrines of state-craft which were systematised by Machiavelli in his treatise "The Prince."

Both in public and private life Thomas Cromwell was accustomed to be arbitrary. The chronicler Stow in his survey of London has given us an account of one arbitrary deed committed by the King's new favorite just after his rise to power :

On the South side and at the west end of this church [Augustine Friars in London] many fair houses are builded, namely in Throgmorton Street, One very large and spacious, builded in the place of old and small tenements by Thomas Cromwell, Master of the Rolls. This house being finished, and having some reasonable plot of ground left for a garden, he caused the pales of the garden adjoining to the north part thereof on a sudden to be taken down, twenty-two foot to be measured forth right into the north of every man's ground, a line there to be drawn, a trench to be cast, a foundation laid and a high brick wall to be builded. My father had a garden there, and a house standing close to his south pale, this house they loosed from the ground and have upon rollers into my father's garden twenty-two foot, ere my father heard thereof, no warning was given him nor other answer, when he spake to the surveyors of the work, but that their master Sir Thomas commanded them to do so; no man durst go to argue the matter, but each man lost his ground ... Thus much of mine own knowledge have I thought good to note, that the sudden rising of some men causeth them to forget themselves. <sup>22</sup>

21 -----  
England Under the Tudors, 122.

22 Stow, Survey of London, ed. 1603, 180. Other arbitrary acts are recorded by John Foxe.

On the other hand we are given a number of glimpses into the private and domestic life of Cromwell which present a not unpleasing picture of the home circle in which he moved. He had friends who liked to go to his home, and who afterwards remembered their visit with pleasure. John Creke addresses him as "the dearest man in the world," and says that the recollection of walking with Cromwell in the garden and talking of spiritual things, makes him desperate with loneliness.<sup>23</sup> Three different men within a year choose, among the customary superscriptions for letters, such forms as "my right loving friend, right faithful friend, heartily beloved friend." Several letters to him end with words of greeting to common friends. In Cromwell's family circle, his wife and his mother both played their part. Correspondents ask to be remembered to them. One wants the good housewife "to send another plaster for his knee," while another desires to be commended "to your mother, after you my most singular good friend."<sup>24</sup> These are slight instances, but everything in the few personal letters which have survived from this early period points towards a stable and even happy domestic life and a home visited by good friends and "gossips," with whom Cromwell shared the pleasures of life "down to a fat doe."

-----  
<sup>23</sup> Cal. III, No. 2394.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Nos. 2624, 3015, 3502. Also IV, No. 1385.

Such then, in brief, was the man who was destined to bring about a convulsion in England and even Europe that was to alter profoundly both the religious and political life of the island kingdom. "One of the most persevering, astute, and most unscrupulousne politicians of the age," possessing "no religious interests or scruples to hinder him,"<sup>25</sup> he waited and worked in obscurity until the day of his opportunity came. And when it came, he was ready.

-----

<sup>25</sup> A. H. Newman, A Manual of Church History, II, 257.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CARDINAL'S SECRETARY

During the eight years that followed his return to England from the Continent, Thomas Cromwell was engaged in consolidating his position as a lawyer, at the same time carrying on his business of cloth-merchant and wool-dyer. After the year 1520 the documentary evidence as to his manner of life becomes increasingly abundant. It is evident that he found good success as a money-lender, having even some of the nobility as his clients. His talents as a financier were beginning to bring him to the front, and by 1520 he was prominent enough to have come under the notice of Cardinal Wolsey. Some think that he may have been introduced to the great Cardinal by his cousin Robert, who was the Vicar of Battersea, near London, or by the young Marquis of Dorset, whom Cromwell seems to have served as some kind of agent.<sup>1</sup> Gasquet suggests that he may have been introduced to the Cardinal by Lord Henry Percy, whom Cromwell had served in his capacity of money-lender.<sup>2</sup> Percy was attached to the magnificent court of Wolsey at York, and may have been impressed by the astuteness of the lawyer who some day was to become the Earl of Essex and first minister to the King. In the State Papers

---

<sup>1</sup> Cal. II, No. 1369

<sup>2</sup> Henry VIII and the English Monasteries, 137.

of October, 1520, we discover Cromwell engaged in acting definitely in behalf of Wolsey in a "suit concerning tithes." A dispute had arisen between the Vicar of Cheshunt and the prioress of the abbey there concerning the payment of some tithes, and Cromwell is appointed to "make clear the rights and wrongs of the case and the best way of handling it."<sup>3</sup>

From this time on he becomes more and more a man of public affairs. He does not abandon any of the private activities that afford him opportunities to add to his personal wealth. He continues to use his friend and agent in Antwerp, Stephen Vaughn, as a medium through whom he may keep in touch with Continental markets and execute his various business transactions. He seems never to have given up his practice of money-lending. Such a business always possessed special attractions for him, and even when he was at the very height of his power he can be found lending considerable sums of money to the aristocracy.<sup>4</sup>

In the year 1523 lawyer Cromwell presented himself in the public arena and began to attract wider attention. King Henry, being in need of money, had been compelled to summon Parliament, the first in eight years. In this gathering Cromwell had obtained a seat, and had made his influence felt. Here let us note an important difference between the policies of Cardinal Wolsey and the man who was to

-----  
<sup>3</sup> Cal. III, 1483. Also Merriman, I, 15.

<sup>4</sup> Gasquet, 137.

succeed him as the King's chief minister. Wolsey had distrusted parliaments, and had been persistent and consistent in using his influence with Henry VIII to prevent, as far as was possible, their coming together. Cromwell, on the other hand, discerned what a potent force parliament could be if controlled by an autocratic ruler. He realised that it was important for him to make himself and his views to be noticed by the parliament of 1523, and when he later became powerful in the kingdom, he was careful to use the parliaments as effective though subordinate instruments to execute his own and King Henry's decrees. It is very doubtful if some of his measures would otherwise have succeeded in the way they did.

It is illuminating to consider what his reactions actually were to his first parliament. On the seventeenth of August, 1523, he wrote to a friend as follows:

I have indured a parliament, which continued by a space of seventeen whole weeks, where we discoursed of war, peace, strife, contention, debate, murmur, grudge, riches, poverty, penury, truth, falsehood, justice, equity, deceit, oppression, magnanimity, activity, force, treason, murder, felony, and also how a commonwealth might be edified and continued in our realm. Howbeit in conclusion we have done as our predecessors have been wont to do, that is to say, as well as we might, and have left off where we began. <sup>5</sup>

It is not difficult to detect here something of cynicism, though at present light-hearted. Cromwell was never very interested in discussion, especially of the public king.

In his letter Cromwell goes on to say that parliament has granted the King the largest subsidy ever granted in the history of the realm, and he does not conceal the fact that he is hardly pleased about it.

There is, however, no evidence that Cromwell himself actually took an active part in the debates concerning this subsidy, but an interesting document has been handed down to us which would seem to indicate very clearly what his own attitude was in the matter. This is a copy of a speech in the handwriting of Cromwell's clerk and attributed to Cromwell by all leading students of the subject. The composer of the speech expresses his alarm over the decision of King Henry to lead an army to France in person, fearing that the promised aid of the emperor may not be sufficient to preserve the King from falling into the hands of his French enemies. As for the proposed army of thirty thousand foot and ten thousand horse which are needed, he thinks the procuring and equipping of such a force would exhaust all coin and bullion in the realm, for it does not exceed one million pounds. England might therefore be compelled "to coin leather, as we once did," and if the King should be taken prisoner it would not be possible to redeem him. The first thing that needed to be done was to assure the King's position at home by subjugating the troublesome kingdom of Scotland. This would be a sure way to weaken

France, whose alliances with Scotland had so long been a menace to the security of England. He urges the King to remember that an invasion of France is not as easy now as it was in former times, when the English had French provinces loyal to them upon whom they could count for support. Therefore it is the counsel of the composer of this speech that the King restrain his great courage and remain at home. <sup>6</sup>

Innes makes a significant observation with reference to Cromwell's conduct in this matter:

The speech is exceedingly clever, and most diplomatically expressed - but is dead against Wolsey's subsidy. Perhaps he thought better of it, and kept the manuscript. If not, it was an audacious speech to make, for a man who was getting in touch with the Cardinal, from whose good graces much might be hoped. Still, a like audacity paid him well some six years later. It may have been carefully calculated in both instances; but in both there were big risks. <sup>7</sup>

It has been pointed out that on this occasion Cromwell succeeded in clearly enunciating the main principles of the policy by which he was soon to guide the affairs of England, while he so flattered King, nobles, and people, that he made many friends, and avoided the enmity of those opposed to him. The man who could make such a speech as this would not be likely to escape the notice of one as astute as Henry VIII. "It was probably within the walls

-----  
1 Cal. III, 2958.

2 Ten Tudor Statesmen, 119.



of this parliament that Cromwell laid the first stone of his future greatness as servant and counsellor of the King."<sup>8</sup>

After 1524 Thomas Cromwell gradually loom larger upon the political horizon. In this year he was admitted to greater legal prominence by being elected to membership in Gray's Inn, and was also appointed to be one of the Subsidy Commissioners for the Hundred of Ossulton in Middlesex.<sup>9</sup> These, however, were petty distinctions compared to his growing favor and intimacy with Wolsey. The State Papers for 1524-1525 reveal him as the Cardinal's patient, plodding, but active secretary.<sup>10</sup> He transacts many and varied forms of legal business for his master, and becomes to an increasing extent the dispenser of Wolsey's mercy and patronage. People not only solicit his aid privately, but in several cases letters containing requests to the Cardinal are addressed directly to the "right worshipful Master Cromwell." He soon becomes chief among all Wolsey's advisers, and is now usually referred to by the distinctive title of "Councillor to my Lord Legate." Some have suggested that from the beginning Wolsey used his new secretary in connection with his own political schemes, but Merriman is of the opinion that this is an error.<sup>11</sup> He

---

<sup>8</sup> Merriman, I, 46.

<sup>9</sup> Cal. IV, 969

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Nos. 294, 358, 979, 1385, 1620, 2347, 2379, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Merriman, I, 48.

believes that Cromwell's lowly birth and humble origin befitted him at first only for the more modest duties of a private secretary and agent. Nevertheless, the Cardinal was becoming increasingly conscious of Cromwell's remarkable knowledge of human nature and his great capacity for business. And it was not long before he turned over to him an undertaking as important and delicate as could be imagined for a man in his position, and undertaking which was dear to Wolsey's heart and at the same time provided the good Thomas with an excellent opportunity to rehearse for his future rôle of "Hammer of the Monks."

The shadow of the divorce which was to becloud the Cardinal's sky and ultimately to bring about his ruin had not appeared on the horizon in 1525. Anne Boleyn was not yet Queen Katherine's rival for the throne, though it is probable that Henry delighted in her as a possible mistress. The King's conscience does not seem to have been unduly disturbed until 1526 or 1527, when Anne had begun to dominate him completely. Wolsey, therefore, could still find pleasure in pursuing his own schemes. Some of these schemes had commendable ends in view, and one of these was his plan for the improvement of the condition of the clergy. Up to a certain point he seems to have been anxious to remedy specific grievances, and while he did not surrender any of the privileges of his order, he made his

own Legatine Courts a vast improvement on the practice of the ordinary Ecclesiastical Courts. His visitations brought about improved discipline in many of the larger religious houses, and some of his appointments, as for example, in the case of the good Abbot of Glastonbury, were notably admirable. On one occasion, and that at a time when it was not convenient for him to do so, he braved the anger of King Henry himself by rejecting an unworthy abbess for Wilton Abbey.<sup>12</sup> He was an earnest patron of education, and was fully alive to the necessity of giving a much more complete and disciplinary training to the new generation of clergy. Thus it came about that he embarked upon the undertaking to create his great foundations of Oxford and Ipswich. Both his desire for an educated clergy and his natural love of doing the grand thing urged him to the task. And Thomas Cromwell was among those selected to assist in carrying out the plan.

The cautious Cardinal had little desire to call for parliamentary aid. Yet he needed a new source of revenue, and to obtain it he turned to the smaller monastic establishments, many of which he honestly thought did not justify their existence nor their continuance. Disciplinarian

-----

<sup>12</sup> Innes, Ten Tudor Statesmen, 65.

that he was, he was quite ready to suppress the smaller foundations in which a departure from the established habits and traditions of religious asceticism had come about. Some of these houses had become "resorts of the idle and worthless, who were permitted by supine or indulgent superiors to exchange a life of monastic discipline for one of luxury and indolence, if not of downright vice."<sup>13</sup> Wolsey believed that the revenue of some of these establishments could be put to better use in providing for Colleges where a better clergy could be prepared. So on January 24, 1525 he commissioned Sir William Gascoigne, William Burbank, and Thomas Cromwell to survey the monasteries of Tykford, Raveneston, Poghley, Medmenham, Wallingford, and Finchley with their possessions. On the same day he appointed Thomas Cromwell and John Smyth as attorney for the site and circuit of Thoby, Blakamore, Stanesgate, and Tiptree, which had been granted to John Higden, Dean of Cardinal's College.<sup>14</sup>

So much investigation and transferring of land was naturally attended with many difficulties, and as Merriman observes, "the first requisites for the accomplishment of such a design ... were an intimate knowledge of law, and a far-seeing, harsh, and rather unscrupulous nature."<sup>15</sup> Cromwell was not deficient in any of these qualifications, and as

---

<sup>13</sup> Merriman, I, 48.

<sup>14</sup> Cal. I, 989, 990.

<sup>15</sup> I, 49.

Wolsey was kept busy enough with his foreign policy, he was willing that his secretary should supervise the work of surveying the monasteries condemned to suppression.

We do not know fully what means the Cardinal employed to obtain the papal permission to begin the work of suppression, but it is evident that he did not make known all of his plans. He did, however, receive the sanction of the Pope to proceed with the purification of some of the lesser houses, and to suppress those whom he considered were not fulfilling their proper function. It is evident that the papal authorities did not foresee the lengths to which this suppression would be carried, or Wolsey would not have received the authority he did.

Wolsey's position did not guarantee the acceptance of his measures by the common people. The suppression of even these small houses was decidedly unpopular with the people in all parts of England. The North was particularly resentful, both at this time and ten years later, when the Pilgrimage of Grace made a desperate attempt to arrest the complete dissolution of the monasteries in England. The less educated classes were against any sweeping measures of reform. They considered that the old system was working satisfactorily, and feared that even a loyal and moderate churchman like Cardinal Wolsey might go too far in carrying out his schemes for reform. It is in this

connection that Creighton remarks that Wolsey was a conservative reformer, but that a "conservative reformer raises as much hostility as does a revolutionist."<sup>16</sup>

The manner in which the measure was executed made it more unpopular than ever.<sup>17</sup> The work of surveying and transferring the property and land "no doubt gave Cromwell opportunities of spreading his own business, and making himself useful friends,"<sup>18</sup> but he made far more enemies. As the chief agent, he was usually present in person at the surrenders and dissolutions, and when this was not possible one of his many and faithful agents sent him an exact account of the proceedings in his absence.<sup>19</sup> It was therefore inevitable that most of the odium attached to the work should have been directed against him. Complaints against him seem to have been made even to the King, for on August 19, 1527, Knight, the Archdeacon of Chester, wrote to Wolsey who was in France that "incredible things are spoken about Allen (Cromwell's coadjutor) and Cromwell, as I have heard from the King and others. It is most expedient that you should know them at your coming."<sup>20</sup>

There were a number of reasons why these measures should have been unpopular with the rank and file of the

-----  
<sup>16</sup> Mandell Creighton, Cardinal Wolsey, 147

<sup>17</sup> Cf. preface to Cal. IV, pp. 368-369.

<sup>18</sup> Creighton, 188.

<sup>19</sup> Merriman, I, 49.

<sup>20</sup> Cal. IV, No. 3360.

people. The monks were the easiest of landlords, their defenceless condition and their religious mode of life often preventing them from asserting their claims too strongly even against really troublesome tenants. The new landlords were much more strict and more concerned with personal profits. Besides this, every monastery was required to feed the poor, shelter and refresh the traveller, and provide refuge for the outcast. No such hospitality characterized the new owners of the confiscated lands, and the people naturally felt aggrieved that hospitable monasteries should have been given over to greedy men for purely secular and selfish reasons.

In August, 1527, an attempt seems to have been made upon Cromwell's life by an individual called a "sanctuary man."<sup>21</sup> Popular demand for his punishment grew louder, but the strong hand of Wolsey protected him. Indeed, the Cromwell showed his approval of Cromwell's diligence by making him receiver-general of Cardinal's College at Oxford and also chief agent in connection with the affairs of the Ipswich foundation. It was he who drew up the deeds for the foundations of both Colleges.<sup>22</sup> All Wolsey's legal business seems now to have passed through his hands, although he still found time to manage the affairs of a goodly number of his own clients besides.<sup>23</sup>

-----  
<sup>21</sup> Cal. IV, 3334, and Merriman I, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Cal. IV, 3461, 3536, 4441, 5186.

<sup>23</sup> D. N. B. V, 195

One cannot but be amazed at the amount and variety of labor which Cromwell performed in his capacity of secretary to Wolsey. In connection with the monasteries, his work consisted of surveying and estimating the value of the property, making careful inventories thereof, and supervising the stripping, removal, and sale of altars, furnishings, bells, and tapestry. Land and permanent possessions were either sold or leased on the spot, and although "the transfer of property settlements with tenants, and the adjustment of claims were a task of far greater intricacy than Wolsey had expected ... Cromwell's success in carrying it out was little short of marvellous."<sup>24</sup>

Besides surveying and confiscating the monasteries and drawing up the necessary deeds for Ipswich and Oxford, he kept the accounts of all incomes from the suppressed houses, as well as of the expenses connected with the building of the two Colleges. He was continually superintending the actual work of construction on the new institutions, meanwhile reporting the progress to his master. Long lists of the manors and monasteries are to be seen to-day at the English Record Office, <sup>25</sup> and bear witness to the astonishing amount of work performed by the man who was later to take into his hands the details as well as the planning of

-----

<sup>24</sup> Merriman, I, 49.

<sup>25</sup> Cal. IV, 3461, 4778, 5330.



the policies and actions of Henry VIII. Unscrupulous though he may have been, Cromwell was an administrator to his fingertips.

There is general agreement among historians as to the judgment of Merriman when he says that "Cromwell's efficiency in carrying out this work was only equalled by his notorious accessibility to bribes."<sup>26</sup> As he rose to ever higher favor and importance, he became sought after by rich and poor. In April, 1527, Henry Lacey writes to congratulate him on his promotion to Wolsey's favor. In May of the same year he is mentioned as a granter of annuities. In June of 1528 we find him staying with Wolsey at Hampton Court, and about the same time Richard Bellyssis promises him a good gelding if he will prefer a friend to the position of mint-master in Durham. Poor men petitioned him that they might not lose house and home through the dissolution of the monastery from which they were held. The noble and the great were among his correspondents and suitors. Lord Berners solicits his aid in his dealings with Wolsey, while the Abbot of York writes his heartfelt thanks for his kindness in speaking well of him and his monastery to the Cardinal.<sup>27</sup> Anne Boleyn writes to him in 1529, addressing him as "secretary to my lord," a post previously held by Stephen

<sup>26</sup> Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell, I, 50.

<sup>27</sup> D.N.B. V, 195. Also Cal. 3079, 3119, 4201, 5169, 5365, 5456.

Gardiner, whom the King had just taken into his own service from that of Wolsey.<sup>28</sup>

Innes has summed up the career of Thomas Cromwell up to this point so well, that his paragraph is worth quoting as we conclude the second chapter of this study.

After a brief experience in camp and in the guard-room, the young man is apparently for some years knocking about from Venice to Antwerp, acquiring a sound knowledge of trade and a mastery of the ways of traders. Then he returns to England and turns his knowledge to account, combining with it a lucrative practice, as a presumably somewhat unscrupulous but amazingly clever attorney. Always it is the seamy side of life which concerns him, and at any rate after he has sown his wild oats and acquired experience, he adds to the conviction that all men would be knaves if they could, the certainty that, at least in comparison with Thomas Cromwell, most of them are fools. This consciousness makes him ambitious. He manages to attract the great Cardinal's attention by his abilities. The summoning of a parliament gives him an opportunity. He prepares a speech for it, which will certainly make him a man of some mark if it is delivered ... and a clever speech in opposition ... is not always an obstacle to government favour. Whether he made that speech pay him by delivering it or by suppressing it remains uncertain - either is possible. Anyhow, from that date his favour and prosperity advanced rapidly; his thorough knowledge of law, of business, and of character, and his immense mastery of detail, making him a quite invaluable servant. And he who has become invaluable to the first minister of the Court may become invaluable to the Court itself.<sup>29</sup>

-----  
<sup>28</sup> Cal. IV, 5366, and D.N.B. V, 195.  
<sup>29</sup> Ten Tudor Statesmen, 123.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE KING'S MINISTER

In October of the year 1529 Pope Clement VII recalled the cause concerning King Henry's divorce to Rome. For months the King had been waiting in suspense, relying on promises that had been fed to him by Wolsey, Campeggio and others that the "great matter" would have a satisfactory issue for him. Wolsey and other agents has been empowered to expend large sums of money and to make the most lavish promises of support to the Pope in consideration of the granting of the divorce.<sup>1</sup> Clement was naturally in an extremely difficult position. He had no desire to antagonize either Henry or the emperor, and had therefore reluctantly assented to the King's suggestion that Wolsey and Campeggio should be commissioned to try the case in England. A bull had been prepared and placed in the hands of Campeggio, which was not to be used unless the two cardinals were able to decide that an annulment of the marriage with Katherine was possible. Campeggio had been instructed to keep this bull out of the hands of Henry.<sup>2</sup> A court of hearing had been set up, but after its opening it had accomplished very little. It was adjourned several times, and finally became something of a fiasco. Thus the Pope decided to recall the case to his own jurisdiction.

---

<sup>1</sup> Newman, A Manual of Church History, II, 256.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Henry was now exasperated beyond measure, and with characteristic ingratitude turned upon his chief minister. The Cardinal was degraded from all his offices and emoluments. On October 17 he surrendered the Great Seal to Norfolk and Suffolk in the presence of Sir William FitzWilliam, John Taylor, and Stephen Gardiner. Eight days later the Seal was given to Sir Thomas More. <sup>3</sup>

Cromwell, whether he wished it or not, was involved in his master's fall, and one as astute as he was quick to see the extreme danger of his own position. But whatever good qualities he may have lacked, he was certainly not deficient in courage, nor did he lose his head in an emergency. He had reason to fear the consequences of acts which, although perpetrated in the Cardinal's service and under cover of his authority, had placed him within reach of the law.<sup>4</sup> A less bold and far-seeing man might have been tempted to attempt to flee for his life while flight was possible. There is no doubt that he was anxious and fearful, for we have already noticed the account of his weeping and praying as described by Cavendish. As he bewailed his unfavorable situation at Esher on November 1, about two weeks after Wolsey's fall, he confessed to Cavendish that he was afraid he was going to lose all. He was despised, he said, for "true and

---

<sup>3</sup> Cal. IV, 6026.

<sup>4</sup> Gasquet, 176.

diligent service," and disdained for his master's sake. He protests, "I never had promotion by my lord to the increase of my living." 5

Stephen Vaughn was anxious about Cromwell's fate. He writes to his friend from Antwerp on October 20, expressing his fears. "You are," he says, "more hated for your master's sake than for anything which you have wrongfully done to any man." Yet he hopes that his friend's "truth and wisdom" will preserve him in this critical hour. 6

Says Gasquet:

Thomas Cromwell thought it high time to look to his own affairs. More especially was this necessary as there seems to have been a report current which affected him most seriously. When Wolsey's case was settled, the people said, then would come Cromwell's turn. Cardinal Pole, who was in London at the time, asserts that he himself heard the expression of popular exultation over the expected punishment of one considered so well deserving of death. He declares also, that it was asserted Cromwell had already been cast into prison. In fact the popular voice had already consigned him to the gallows. 7

On November 1, therefore, the day on which Cavendish had found him weeping, Cromwell set out on his ride to London, determined to "make or mar" before he returns. Accompanied by his clerk, Ralph Sadler, he arrived in London, and within a few days had executed in his own behalf a coup that was as daring as it was clever. Almost overnight he found himself

---

5 Cavendish, Life of Wolsey, 169

6 Cal. IV, 6036.

7 Henry VIII and the English Monasteries, 139.

becoming indispensable to the king who had discarded his master Wolsey.

The events of the days immediately following Cromwell's arrival in London are not altogether clear, but we do know two important results of his visit. First, he somehow obtained a seat in Parliament, and also secured an interview with Henry VIII.

One of the strongest testimonies to the astuteness and unscrupulousness of the good Thomas is the knowledge that he was ready to associate himself at this time with the Norfolk-Boleyn faction, despite the fact that this group was bitterly hostile to Cardinal Wolsey. It would appear that the Duke of Norfolk used his influence to obtain a parliamentary seat for Cromwell. To what extent this was due directly to the King's influence we cannot determine, but it is clear that once Cromwell had taken his seat, he became the mouthpiece of Henry in the matter of Wolsey's attainder.<sup>8</sup> He sat as representative for the township of Taunton, sitting as "one of the burgesses."

The most important matter before Parliament was the attainder of Wolsey. Feeling was running high against the fallen minister, both in and out of Parliament. Yet Henry did not at first wish the complete overthrow of the Cardinal. He was incensed at the failure of the Divorce, and desired to

---

<sup>8</sup> Cal. IV, 6098, 6203, 6249.

see Wolsey humbled and stripped of some of his offices and power. He seems, however, to have wished to retain his former favorite in case he should need him. Creighton says that when the Cardinal was taken sick, Henry relented somewhat and sent his own physician, Dr Buttes, to him, saying, "I would not lose him for twenty thousand pounds." The physician advised the King to send some kind words. Henry is said not only to have done so, but also to have made Anne Boleyn write to Wolsey, something she did very reluctantly.<sup>9</sup> One is therefore tempted to wonder if the Cardinal would have been so punished and discarded by Henry one year later had Thomas Cromwell not proved himself a counsellor more to the King's liking.

In November Parliament started to consider the attainder. A bill was introduced into the House of Lords depriving Wolsey forever of office. When this was brought before the Commons, Cromwell boldly resisted it. One is surprised to find the new chancellor, Thomas More, indulging in unworthy taunts at the fallen Wolsey. This was so out of keeping with his usual character, and doubtless reflects the extreme dislike of Wolsey felt by those who had resented the Cardinal's former arrogance towards his colleagues and others.

The bill of attainder was founded upon "a series of articles drawn up long before by his enemies, frivolous and groundless charges," according to Creighton. Gasquet,

---

<sup>9</sup> Cardinal Wolsey, 191.

however, notes that the charges against the Cardinal were founded, at least partially, upon grave injustices done in connection with the work of suppressing the monasteries.<sup>10</sup> This being so, it was of the utmost concern to Cromwell that the bill should be defeated. As chief agent in this business, his own safety was involved, and "in defending his patron in parliament, though it may be possible that he was actuated by sincere motives of gratitude ... in defeating the bill of attainder, he was in reality only making the best possible defence of himself."

Two writers are worth quoting concerning Cromwell's sincerity at this time and during subsequent months of Wolsey's disgrace. Merriman says:

Modern investigation has made it certain that there is but little historical foundation for the touching pictures drawn by Cavendish, Shakespeare, and ... later, Froude, which represent Cromwell as the faithful servant of his fallen master, unselfish, and exclusively devoted to his interests ... While Cromwell kept up the appearance of spending all his time in helping Wolsey in his disgrace, he really was occupied in serving his own ends, and in regaining the favour he had lost as the Cardinal's agent. If Cromwell had gone over to the Norfolk-Boleyn faction at once, he would have been called a deserter. So he took Wolsey's side, but pulled for himself.<sup>11</sup>

Dean Hook observes on the same matter:

I have read with attention the letters addressed to Cromwell by Wolsey, and I think that any one who does so will come to the conclusion that Wolsey had no confidence in

-----  
<sup>10</sup> Henry VIII, 138

<sup>11</sup> ~~Life and Letters of Thos. Cromwell, I, 70.~~



Cromwell's sincerity, and that Cromwell did not treat his fallen master with consideration and kindness. <sup>12</sup>

We do not know much about Cromwell's interview with the King, but "it seems certain that at this interview Cromwell obtained the king's approval to the defeat of the bill of attainder, and to the policy of proceeding against the cardinal under the statute of praemunire."<sup>13</sup> By this means the King could possess the fallen minister's property, while at the same time all the clergy could be made to appear guilty. "All who had admitted these legatine powers were involved in the meshes of the legal statute and were in danger of forfeiting goods and chattels to the king's majesty."<sup>14</sup>

The attainder had served its purpose of casting a stigma on Wolsey, and justifying Henry's conduct towards him. Through Cromwell's influence, therefore, it was dropped, after he had produced a confession of misdeeds written by the Cardinal.<sup>15</sup> This was done "not against the wishes of the King, who was as yet disinclined to deprive himself of the chance of resuscitating the great minister."<sup>16</sup> Cromwell had served Wolsey, himself and the King by a very valuable master-stroke of timely diplomacy.

-----  
<sup>12</sup> Lives of The Archbishops, VI, 128

<sup>13</sup> Gasquet, 140.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Cal. IV, 6017.

<sup>16</sup> Innes, England Under the Tudors, 116.

The legal knowledge and cunning manifest in these proceedings reveal the mind of Cromwell. He had opened up a new vista to the perplexed and autocratic Henry, and here was a king who, though forceful enough in his own decisions, knew how to profit from and to use good counsel. Clearly Cromwell was a man after his own heart. It seemed as if a way out of his troubles was appearing.

Cromwell's ascendancy in guiding the counsels of the King is divided into two stages. From the time of Wolsey's fall in 1529 until the year 1533, the new counsellor was compelled to work more or less behind the scenes. He is not referred to in the State Papers, and his rôle was very obscure. This was doubtless because of the odium attached to his name, and also because of his humble birth. Henry had no wish to spoil his plans by presenting an unpopular minister too soon. Even the court hardly realised Cromwell's influence, for Chapuys, keen and informed though he was, was taken by surprise in 1533, when he suddenly recognizes in this new man the minister who had taken the direction of the King's affairs into his hands.<sup>17</sup>

The second stage of this ascendancy dates from 1533 to the fall of Cromwell in 1540. During this period the King's new favorite was busy carrying out those policies which were undoubtedly the products of his own brain.

-----

<sup>17</sup> Cal. VI, 465. See also Merriman, I, 216.

He becomes largely the originator as well as the executor of the schemes of Henry VIII, schemes which have a single aim—the absolute supremacy of the King. So that there seems no reason to doubt the truth of Belloc's statement that "when Henry VIII broke with Rome, it was on the persuasion of a man Thomas Cromwell, who was utterly indifferent to any consequences as long as filled his own pockets." <sup>18</sup>

We are now concerned with tracing Cromwell's influence over Henry's policies during the first half of the ten years of his supremacy, particularly as it relates to the matters of the Divorce, the suppression of the clergy, and the dissolution of the monasteries. It is not always possible to keep these matters separate in analyzing the whole situation, because certain steps taken by the King and his minister affected more than one of these problems at the same time. To some extent, however, we shall endeavor to treat each of these matters as a unit of its own.

With respect to the Divorce, it is evident that Cromwell was prepared to go to greater lengths than Cardinal Wolsey had been willing to go. To the Cardinal the obtaining of the Divorce had been a very troublesome and distasteful undertaking. It seemed to him to be the lesser of two real evils. He looked upon it as a concession to Henry's weakness, perhaps believing a little in the affirmed scruples of the King with regard to his marriage. If Katharine could be

induced to forego her appeal to Rome and admit that she had no real rights upon which to stand, some compromise might have been arranged. Wolsey's attitude had been that of a liberal, humanistic churchman caught in a tight corner. Some way out had to be found, if the breach between Henry and the Holy See was to be healed.

Cromwell's attitude was entirely different. He had no conscientious scruples in the matter, and probably doubted that Henry really had. He knew that Henry was irked by Anne Boleyn's refusal to become his mere mistress, and that now was the time to suggest stronger measures to him. He saw in the Pope's refusal to grant Henry's desire not a hindrance to his policy, but an opportunity to advance it by urging the King to take this opportunity of asserting his supremacy in all matters within his own realm. Belloc has summed up the matter as follows:

Cromwell, who had been an adventurer in Italy ... and had had some acquaintance with European and other foreign examples... suggested to Henry the first move, not for breaking with the Papacy - nobody as yet had any idea of that - but for bringing special pressure upon the Pope. He suggested that Henry should take the opinion of the European Universities, and by heavy bribes, obtain at least some verdicts in his favour from them ... To this act succeeded a number of others, not aimed at breaking with the Pope, but threatening him with a breach, and so attempting to force from him a favourable decision, that is, a verdict against Catherine, and for Henry's plea. 19

Unfortunately, Mr Belloc does not give us his source for these details, and we have, therefore, no historical grounds for believing that it was Cromwell, rather than Cranmer, as most historians believe, who was responsible for the appeal to the Universities. Nor does he make good his point that Cromwell did not from the beginning aim at a break with Rome. While his religious principles were very fluid, his political Protestantism was fixed. However, Belloc is right in his assertion that Cromwell sought to bring pressure on the Pope.

Lingard says of this:

When Henry, despairing of obtaining the pope's consent, declared he would abandon the idea, Cromwell urged him to imitate the princes of Germany, who had thrown off the yoke of Rome; and with the authority of parliament, to declare himself the head of the church within his own realm. Henry listened with surprise and pleasure to something which flattered not only his passion for Anna Boleyn, but his thirst of wealth and greediness of power. He thanked Cromwell, and ordered him to be sworn of his privy council. Soon afterward, a deputation was sent to Catherine with an order for her to leave the palace at Windsor.<sup>20</sup>

This is also affirmed by Friedmann:

During the first month of 1531, Henry seems to have lost heart... Imperial agents were pressing the pope to excommunicate him. Henry was not yet in a position to resist, the public mind in England being unprepared for a schism ... It was at this most critical juncture that Henry found an able and faithful ally in a man who had just entered public life, but who had risen in it with the utmost rapidity.<sup>21</sup>

-----  
<sup>20</sup> History of England, 349.

<sup>21</sup> Anne Boleyn, I, 131-134.

One of the chief sources concerning Thomas Cromwell's influence at this time is Cardinal Pole. In his Apologia he has written somewhat at length on the subject, and as his words are those of a contemporary, they are worth giving in summary.

And lest any one should imagine that I have adapted a discourse to the Character of the person, I declare with the strictest regard to truth, that I have only thrown together, either what, on different occasions I have heard from himself, or learnt from those who were privy to all his designs, and have unquestionable proofs of everything I set down.

Pole then gives the substance of what Cromwell said to the King, which was something as follows: That Henry might, "with great emolument of power, profit and honor," extricate himself from his present difficulty, not only with respect to his immediate desires, but also his future security from opposition. His subjects must be taught to fear him. He were no better than a private citizen if he were not made free from the restraints imposed upon ordinary men. In fact, even common men were allowed to follow their desires in such matters. Restraints such as those imposed upon him now were "levelling." The King was to be different from all others in his realm, and therefore should not be guided by "counsels of fear," though preserving outward rectitude. The people had no right to pass judgment upon their ruler, nor should he be confined by the wrangling of Schoolmen. If the Pope deferred to the Emperor and refused the Divorce, then the King should use the opportunity to free himself and his

kingdom from the "slavery of a foreign yoke," as did the German princes. Two heads in the same state was a "prodigy." The clergy were not free from the jurisdiction of the Prince. Therefore let the King declare himself to be what in reality he was - the Head of the Church in England. Now a "perfect tranquillity at home and abroad afforded him a favourable circumstance of recovering what usurpation had so long held back from him," namely, obtaining the desired object of his choice, and the increasing of his wealth and power. At all hazards, the Supremacy, in all its latitudes, must be preserved.<sup>22</sup>

In his Life of Reginald Pole, Phillips asserts that just before this time Henry had been almost ready to abandon the idea of the Divorce. The King and Anne had been quarreling frequently, the latter being very angry over the delay in the Divorce proceedings.<sup>23</sup> Henry is said to have been impressed by the remonstrances of Wolsey, Campeggio, Pole, and others, and Phillips writes:

The delays of the Court of Rome, together with the great and various inconveniences which would attend the Divorce ... began to stagger his resolution in the prosecution of it. A ray of light had, at length, pierced the chaos of passion ... and let him see the guilt and danger he was engaged in. He did not conceal the trouble he was under, nor the thought he had of easing himself of it; and fetching a deep sigh before several of the Court, as Reginald

---

<sup>22</sup> Apologia ad Carolum V. c.27.

<sup>23</sup> Friedmann, Anne Boleyn, I, 134.

Pole relates from one who was present, he said: 'that since the See of Rome, contrary to his expectations, persisted in refusing to consent to the Divorce, he would no longer contend with her, but give up all further thoughts of it.' This declaration was received with singular joy and applause by all who heard it, and the King continued some days, though not yet resolved, yet conscious what part he ought to act.<sup>24</sup>

It was then, according to Phillips, who bases his conviction upon Pole's narrative, that Cromwell swayed the King from his resolve, and urged him to defy the Pope.

Strype, too, emphasizes the fact that Cromwell was the originator of the measures which led to the schism, although he views the matter from a different angle from what Pole and Phillips do. He writes:

These were some of the resolute steps King Henry made towards the obtaining again this long struggled for, and almost lost Right and Prerogative of Kings in their own Dominions, of being supreme against the Encroachments of the Bishop of Rome. Secretary Cromwell had the great Stroke in all this. And all these Councils and Methods were struck out of his Head. For which as received the Curses, and drew upon himself the Hatred of many, so many more ...extolled him as highly.<sup>25</sup>

An interesting angle of Henry's attitude in this matter of the Divorce is presented by Creighton. He points out that besides the resistance of Anne Boleyn, who refused to become Henry's mistress only, the King himself had some patriotic scruples with reference to the subject. He was determined that there should be no doubt of the legitimacy

-----

<sup>24</sup> Thomas Phillips, Life of Pole, 73. Also D.N.B., V, 197.

<sup>25</sup> Ecclesiastical Memorials, I, 205.



of any children he should have as the result of his union with Anne.

Some recognition is due to him for not allowing desires to overcome patriotism, and leave to England the deplorable legacy of disputed succession. As a man Henry did not strive to subject his desires to the law of right; as a king he was bent upon justifying his own caprice so that it should not do hurt to his royal office, or offend his duty to his kingdom. Henry sinned, but he was bent on sinning royally, and believed that so he could extenuate his sin.<sup>26</sup>

This certainly savors of the principle laid down by Cromwell in his reported conversation with Pole, that a king was free to do almost as he liked, providing that, outwardly at least, he did not offend too glaringly against accepted moral rectitude and the interests of his kingdom. The end would seem to justify the means, and it was permissible for a ruler to do even evil if thereby good would come of it. In this matter, neither Henry nor his minister could be called followers of St Paul.

From now on, guided by a fixed political star, Thomas Cromwell steadily moved towards the final goal he had in view - the absolute supremacy of Henry VIII. And despite the fact that he was more or less completely in the background during the first three or four years of his service as Henry's secretary, there can be little doubt of the truth of the observation that "Cromwell continued through the successive years of the divorce movement - that is,

---

<sup>26</sup> Cardinal Wolsey, 173.

through 1531, 1532, and 1533 - to frame and to urge the governmental policy, and to increase the pressure on the Pope." 27

It is not irrelevant for us to point out here that before Wolsey's death Cromwell had moved away completely from the policies of the Cardinal. An estrangement had come very definitely between them. After Wolsey's fall in 1529, he had been banished the Court. The handling of his affairs fell to Cromwell, who while maintaining an aspect of kindness and making pretentious claims to loyalty, contrived to handle even the Cardinal's matters so that they brought benefit to the servant rather than the master. Cromwell had been quick to appreciate money as a political force, and had persuaded Wolsey to buy off his enemies by granting annuities to needy nobles and court favorites. Gratitude for these grants was bestowed on the secretary who was present rather than to the master who was absent, and even Cavendish finally observed that:

Cromwell perceyved an occasion him by time to help himselfe ... Now began matters to worke to bringe Master Cromwell into estimation in suche sorte as was much hereafter to increase his dignity ... and having the ordering and disposition of suitors, besides the continual access to the King, by means whereof and through his witty demeanour, he grewe continually into the King's favour.<sup>28</sup>

Cromwell soon encouraged the King to take over the revenues of St. Alban's and Winchester, forfeited by Wolsey,

-----  
27 Characters of the Reformation, 88

28 Life of Wolsey, 198.

and also to possess himself of the Colleges at Oxford and Ipswich. This was a severe blow to the Cardinal, for these Colleges had been the pride and joy of his declining years. Yet when he wrote to his servant, deploring the fact that his institutions were being turned to "profane uses,"<sup>29</sup> he received complacent letters from Cromwell advising him to submit to the King and not to make himself more unpopular by "molesting the king" or by further schemes for self-aggrandisement. The secretary also treated Wolsey to a pious homily, part of which we quote:

Think you happy that you are now at liberty to serve God, and banish all vain desires of the world, which bring men nothing but trouble and anxiety. Wherefore, in mine opinion, your grace being as ye are, I suppose ye would not be as ye were to win one hundred times as much as ever ye were possessed of.<sup>30</sup>

Throughout the year that intervened between the fall of Wolsey and his death, we may note an increasing impatience on the part of Cromwell towards his unfortunate master. The Cardinal, waiting anxiously in York for news of his restoration, cannot help being at times a little petulant over the delays and neglect of his good Thomas, and on one occasion seems to have been goaded into accusing Cromwell of "dissembling." This brought to him at York and almost threatening letter from his former dependent, and it is evident that Cromwell feels his position with the

---

<sup>29</sup> Cal. IV, 6254.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 6571.

King is now assured. Thomas Cromwell had now surely become an important individual when he could write to the once all-powerful Cardinal Wolsey, "Trewly your grace in some things over-shooteth yourself ; there is regard to be given what things ye utter, and to whom." <sup>31</sup> One is therefore not very surprised when, in July of 1530, he writes to inform the Cardinal that inasmuch as he is now "one thousand pounds worse than when your troubles began," he must state bluntly that he cannot sustain any longer the cost of pressing the interests of Wolsey.<sup>32</sup> Just three or four months later the broken-hearted Cardinal died, forsaken by all, including his former secretary. "There is no record of Cromwell's saying anything in favor of the Cardinal when his enemies turned against him the second time." <sup>33</sup> From now on the man who had been Wolsey's favorite was to be the King's favorite. Lord Campbell, writing of Cromwell's rapid rise following his change of masters says: "It more resembles that of a slave at once constituted grand vizier in an Eastern despotism than of a minister of state promoted in a constitutional government where law, usage, and public opinion check the capricious humours of the sovereign."<sup>34</sup>

Following the death of the unfortunate Wolsey, Cromwell seems to have faced another crisis. Chapuys states that Sir

---

<sup>31</sup> Cal. IV, 6076.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Merriman, I, 90.

<sup>34</sup> Lives of the Chancellors, I, 600.

John Wallop attacked Cromwell with insults and threats, so that for his own protection the former agent of the stricken Cardinal made it his business immediately to seek and procure an audience with Henry VIII. At this interview he is said to have promised to make Henry the "richest king that was ever in England," and so impressed the King that he made him a member of his council on the spot, though no one was informed of the fact until four months later.<sup>35</sup> And with characteristic energy and shrewdness Cromwell began to put into operation those schemes which he had already suggested to his new patron. Thus it was that Gairdner later wrote concerning the developments that had come about by 1533; "The policy which the King had now been pursuing for four successive years had been inspired by Thomas Cromwell."<sup>36</sup> Innes also observes that while Henry VIII possessed the ability to appreciate and to adopt the plan that would lead to supremacy for him in all things in his realm, "the brain which both conceived and organised it, as well as the hand which executed it, belonged not to the king but to the minister."<sup>37</sup>

It is now necessary for us to take up the matter of Cromwell's dealings with the clergy. Friedmann declares that Cromwell had taken active part in politics before the death of Wolsey, "especially in all matters relating to the

-----  
<sup>35</sup> Cal. IX, 862.

<sup>36</sup> Cambridge Med. History, II, 440.

<sup>37</sup> Ten Tudor Statesmen, 129.

clergy."<sup>38</sup> His service under Wolsey had brought him into very close contact with the Church, and he was quick to see that its hold upon the life and thought of the nation made it the most formidable foe to the complete supremacy of the King. His first task, then, must be to reduce it to a state of comparative weakness. The measures adopted are so clearly in line with his avowed principles, as made known in the parliament of 1523 and in his conversations with Reginald Pole, as well as his subsequent policies, that there can be but little doubt that the strategy used was in every sense his own. He perceived that the fall of the great Wolsey had cast suspicion upon the clergy as a group, and he was keen enough to turn to good account the expressed desire of the Parliament of 1530 for the reform of certain glaring clerical abuses. He discerned the fact that the battle for the Divorce, as well as that of the Supremacy, could be won, not in the Papal Curia at Rome, but in the Houses of Convocation and Parliament.<sup>39</sup> Henry VIII's sudden willingness to sanction the use of these institutions, when contrasted with his former suspicion of them under Wolsey's guidance enables us to trace the hand of the man who advocated the procedure of a King obtaining some sort of popular approval while he pursued his own autocratic ends. He firmly believed in making use of all accepted tools wherever it

---

<sup>38</sup> Anne Boleyn, I, 135

<sup>39</sup> Merriman, I, 93.

possible to do so.

It now became essential to the development of the ends in view that the King should be represented as one who had been cruelly wronged. For this purpose not only was Convocation to be accused of disloyalty, but the Privy Council, the Lords and Commons, and indirectly even the nation itself, were to be involved in the guilt of the fallen Wolsey. All of these had recognized the legatine powers of the former Cardinal and chief minister, and therefore were all guilty under the statute of praemunire. All their personal goods and possessions, nay, even their very lives might be declared forfeited. Constitutionally they were now entirely dependent upon the clemency of the King. The whole body of the clergy were declared particularly guilty, and were urged to conciliate their ruler. For it was Cromwell's theory that the Church was only a department of the State, and as such was subject to the King's will and disposition.<sup>40</sup> It was a daring, a Cromwellian stroke throughout, and its very audacity was the chief reason for its success. Hence Hallam writes:

The king, indeed, was abundantly willing to replenish his exchequer by violent means, and to avenge himself on those who gainsaid his supremacy; but it was this able statesman who, prompted by the natural appetite of ministers for the subject's money, and, as has been generally surmised, by a secret partiality towards the Reformation, devised and carried on with complete success, if not with the utmost prudence, a measure of no inconsiderable hazard and difficulty.<sup>41</sup>

-----  
<sup>40</sup> Newman, Church History, II, 257.

<sup>41</sup> Constitutional History of England 143

The clergy realised that, rightly or wrongly, they were ensnared in the legal trap set for them. The wisest and safest course was simply to admit their guilt and to sue for the King's pardon. They assembled in Convocation, "and offered the King one hundred thousand pounds to be their good lord, and also to give them a pardon of all offences touching the Praemunire, by act of Parliament." They do not seem to have expected the more severe blow that was almost immediately to fall upon them. They thought that Henry was making this affair simply an opportunity for adding to his personal wealth. Even Chapuys did not at first discern the trend. No one really suspected Cromwell, though a little later it became evident that he was behind the whole business, and the legal cunning displayed was his contribution. In January, 1531, Chapuys writes to his master, Charles V, that "when the King has bled the clergy, he will restore to them their liberties, and take them back into his favour." He is of the opinion that "the whole thing is done to bring about a union between the clergy and the nobles."<sup>42</sup> One month later, however, he saw clearly that the invoking of praemunire was simply the prelude to the far-reaching scheme, devised by a master-strategist, to bring the Church completely under the control of the King. It was indeed something more than a striking exhibition of Tudor avarice. <sup>43</sup>

-----  
<sup>42</sup> Cal. V, 62, 70, 105. Also Vi, 416.

<sup>43</sup> Merriman, I, 94.



The payment by the Convocations of Canterbury and of York to the sum of one hundred thousand pounds and then a further eighteen thousand pounds, did not save them. Rather did it make possible further developments in the now fast-ripening plans of Cromwell and Henry. The clergy had admitted not only their guilt, but also the right of the King to control and punish them. They had unwittingly been made to acknowledge another superior than the Bishop of Rome. Henry had invaded what had been considered the Pope's most undeniable prerogative with respect to the clergy, and the hesitant Clement VII had done nothing effective about it. He felt emboldened to take a further step, doubtless at the instigation of Cromwell. He would make clear to the Pope that as he was acknowledged to be supreme by the yielding of the clergy, so he would be supreme in his own home. The brave Katherine was banished from the royal palace at this time (1531), and although Henry did not yet venture upon marriage with Anne Boleyn, he made it plain that if he could not divorce the queen with the sanction of Rome, he would divorce her without it. He instructed the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, to press through the matter of obtaining the decisions of the Universities. <sup>44</sup> Preachers and writers were now encouraged, even ordered to inveigh against the claims of the see of Rome as to its  
-----

44 Newman, Church History, II, 256.

supremacy, and to issue manifestoes (mostly in Latin) defending the King's attitude and action in seeking the Divorce.<sup>45</sup> Cranmer himself wrote a book to prove that the Levitical law, forbidding marriage with a deceased brother's widow, is perpetually binding, and cannot be annulled even by a popr.<sup>46</sup>

Now fully realising the gravity of their position and the tendencies of Henry's policy, the clergy roused themselves to resist. But Cromwell had laid all his plans very carefully, and it was an extremely skillful move on his part to shift the responsibility for the next step onto the Parliament, thus taking the weight off his own and Henry's shoulders. It is to be doubted whether Henry VIII alone would have seen far enough to adopt such a plan on his own initiative.

The King at first refused to take the sum of money offered by Convocation to purchase their pardon, unless the clergy would acknowledge in the preamble to the grant that he was "to be protector and only Supreme Head of the Church and clergy of England."<sup>47</sup> This the Convocation agreed to, providing that it should be clear that this was "only as far as the law of Christ permitted. " Such a clause was ambiguous enough as far as Henry was concerned, for as Chapuys wrote, it was "all the same ... as if they had made

-----

<sup>45</sup> Cal. V, 7, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Newman, II, 256.

<sup>47</sup> Merriman, I, 94.

no reservation, for no one will now be so bold as to contest with his lord the importance of this reservation."<sup>48</sup>

Now came a further step towards royal absolutism. This has been summed up by one historian as follows:

In 1532 the policy of terrorising the clergy and thus indirectly putting pressure upon the Pope, was carried a step further. A petition, drawn up by ... Cromwell, was placed in the hands of the Commons to be presented by them to the King. It contained an attack on the canons passed by the clergy in Convocation, and on the administration of canon law in the ecclesiastical courts. Convocation ... was required by Henry to answer these supposed complaints ... and the result was the "Answer of the Ordinaries," in which Convocation stated the clerical view of the grievances alleged against the Church. Henry insisted that the answer was "very slender," and in the end, taking the matter openly into his own hand, he compelled the clergy to accept three articles, generally known as the "Submission of the Clergy." In future, no new canon was to be put forward in Convocation without the King's license; a committee of thirty-two was to revise the existing canons and abrogate those contrary to the royal prerogatives; and lastly, only those canons which were ratified by the king should stand good. The legislative powers of the Church were thus placed under the control of the State.<sup>49</sup>

Four drafts of this petition exist to-day in the Public Record Office.<sup>50</sup> One of them is written in a hand which may be recognized in the greater part of Cromwell's correspondence of the time, probably that of his chief clerk; it is corrected and revised by Cromwell himself. Of the other three, one, which is uncorrected and therefore probably a final draft, is also written by the clerk, and the other two,

-----  
<sup>48</sup> Cal. V, 7, 9.

<sup>49</sup> E. Wyatt-Davies, A History of England, 209.

<sup>50</sup> Merriman, I, 104.

chiefly in a strange handwriting, are filled with interlineations by Cromwell.

According to Innes, the very phraseology, as well as the handwriting, confirms the authorship of Cromwell, and he points out that the whole intent of the document was to "force the clergy as a body to admit that their authority, whether as individuals or a corporate body, was subordinate to that of the sovereign."<sup>51</sup> He still further remarks that when the clergy were finally compelled to make a complete surrender to the King, the aged and harrassed Archbishop Warham received it as such a terrible blow that it was probably responsible for his death.<sup>52</sup>

Not content with striking at the Pope indirectly through the clergy, Cromwell and Henry delivered a direct blow at the pontiff himself by means of the Annates Bill. Belloc asserts that Cromwell himself was "the author of that special piece of policy."<sup>53</sup> Annates were the first-year revenues of a bishop's see which were paid to the Pope as a kind of ecclesiastical tax. Cromwell contrived to have all Annates henceforth turned into the treasury of the King, but added that "whether this law should come into effect or not depended upon the King's good will."<sup>54</sup> The Divorce was not yet even in sight, and the King and his minister were doubtless

-----  
<sup>51</sup> Ten Tudor Statesmen, 134.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 133.

<sup>53</sup> Characters of the Reformation, 88.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

of the opinion that a loss of revenue would bring Clement VII to a decision in their favor. But the Pope seemed unable to decide, and allowed the policies of the King to ripen into fruition under the watchful care of Cromwell. No breath of anathema came from across the sea, and no interdict fell upon the realm of England. Clement was no Hildebrand.

Just after the Supplication of the Commons appeared, the Parliament had been prorogued for three months. Meanwhile the Ordinaries had prepared a "temperate and dignified reply" to the charges made against them, and this was taken up when Parliament reconvened in April, 1532.<sup>55</sup> Henry was still doubtful of his Commons, found it necessary to intervene personally, even to the extent of having an interview with the Speaker of the House.<sup>56</sup> Still Parliament was hesitant and divided.

In fact matters moved so slowly that the King was obliged to make (or let Cromwell make for him) another of his suspiciously timely discoveries to the effect that his sovereign rights as Supreme Head were not clear, because every bishop at his consecration had made an oath of allegiance to the Pope. The Commons was asked to rectify this.<sup>57</sup>

This treatment of the Church brought about the resignation of Sir Thomas More, who, it will be recalled, had succeeded Wolsey as Lord Chancellor. He was utterly opposed to these new measures and could not be made pliable by any

---

<sup>55</sup> Edward Hall, Chronicle, 788. Also Cal. V, 989.

<sup>56</sup> Merriman, I, 96.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 97.

means to the royal will.<sup>58</sup> He had hampered the progress of Cromwell's plans by consistent opposition to the submission of the clergy, being a staunch and informed Catholic. But now that he was removed (he resigned on May 16, 1532), the King's new secretary, still working more or less behind the scenes, was able to fill every vacancy in the royal service with determined adherents of his own party. Friends and clients of his received minor appointments, " and the whole administration was reorganised under his vigorous direction."<sup>59</sup>

The following estimate of the revolution produced by this new action of Henry and Cromwell is significant:

The most important result of the controversy for us to notice is that the King, acting (as he evidently did) on the advice of Cromwell, had succeeded in reducing Convocation to complete subjugation, and in making Parliament pliant to his will, as it had never been before. The scheme of controlling the clergy is doubly significant, first, as the cause of a great change in itself; second, as the first step of the dominant policy of the next ten years, for establishing the Royal Supremacy in Church and State.<sup>60</sup>

We have now reached a stage in Cromwell's career when we must examine his attitude towards Protestantism. At the time of his overthrow in 1540 he was charged with being a "detestable heretic," but this must not be taken too seriously. In 1530 he had written : "Certain doctors of both the Universities are here to suppress Lutheran opinions ... The

58 Innes, Ten Tudor Statesmen, 134.

59 Friedmann, Anne Boleyn, I, 186.

60 Merriman, I, 97.

1532

fame is that Luther is departed this life. I would he had never been borne."<sup>61</sup> There is no reason to believe ~~that~~ he ever became anything that approached a convert in the ten years that followed. One can hardly imagine Cromwell becoming earnest over any point of doctrine, unless, of course, it advanced some political manoeuver. The estimate of one historian that "Cromwell was in favor of Protestantism so far as it could be made subservient to his absolutist policy" is probably not an over-statement.<sup>62</sup>

It must not be forgotten that Cromwell's action in defiance of Papal authority at this juncture, arose from no hate of the Romish dogmas, nor from any love of the new religion. He carried out all his schemes from political motives; the religious, the emotional side left him absolutely untouched; the practical, the politically serviceable aspect of the case, alone appealed to him.<sup>63</sup>

His relations with Tyndale the reformer during the years 1531 and 1532 illustrate his attitude towards Protestantism. Tyndale was at the ~~time~~ in the Low Counties, but his book on "The Obedience of a Christian Man" was being circulated in England. His theory that there should be "one King, one law in the realm; no class of men exempt from the temporal sword, no law except the law of the land," was much to the taste of Cromwell. It coincided with the policy then being pursued by the English King and his new adviser, and Cromwell was anxious to enlist the support of Tyndale in popularizing the

-----  
<sup>61</sup> Cal. IV, 6076.

<sup>62</sup> Newman, I, 259.

<sup>63</sup> Merriman, I, 97.

new measures to promote royal absolutism. He therefore urged his friend, Stephen Vaughn, to do his utmost to induce the reformer to return to England.<sup>64</sup> Tyndale, however, was hesitant about trusting himself in England, though he maintained contact with Cromwell through Vaughn. Finally, just as Vaughn had become hopeful about getting the reformer to return to his native land, Tyndale made a false step. He sent to Henry, through the medium of Vaughn, the manuscript for his new book, The Answer, a work written against the views of Sir Thomas More. It was full of clear-cut Protestant doctrines, something Henry had never sympathised with. He became furious, and Cromwell came uncomfortably near his downfall ten years before time. The King made him write a wrathful letter to Vaughn, denouncing Tyndale's "venomous and pestiferous workes," and commanding that all intercourse with the reformer should be immediately broken off. Henry even went so far as to send Sir Thomas Elyot to the Continent to arrest Tyndale and bring him home to be punished.<sup>64</sup>

A copy of the letter which Vaughn wrote is preserved in the British Museum, and its abrupt ending suggests that the infuriated Henry, on reading it, had torn it in two.<sup>65</sup> Vaughn, an enthusiastic and emotional individual, had written in glowing terms of Tyndale, and had thus seriously compromised Cromwell. The letter which the minister wrote at the command

-----  
<sup>64</sup> Merriman, I, 101.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.



of the King reflects his perplexity and alarm at the rage of his royal master, and he urges Vaughn to desist from further contact with the author of The Answer. 66

The whole Tyndale episode is noteworthy as the nearest approach to a mistake in Cromwell's internal policy. Henry's anger probably gave him a clear warning that many more such would bring him to certain ruin. He was saved from serious consequences in this case, only because he had amply atoned for it by his brilliant success in obtaining the submission of the clergy.<sup>67</sup>

There is evidence that Cromwell encouraged other reformers besides Tyndale, such as Coverdale, Barnes, and others,<sup>68</sup> and at the time of his, his bitter enemy, Stephen Gardiner, had exploited the association existing between Cromwell and Barnes.<sup>69</sup> However, everything was done from the point of view of political expediency. Like Henry VIII, Cromwell had no interest in innovations unless they contributed to the schemes in mind. Like Henry, too, "he had, doubtless, some regard for the prejudices of the masses, whom the priests and monks might incite to rebellion in case radical changes in religion should be made."<sup>70</sup> Religiously, England was still a Catholic country, and if we are to give any credence to the sincerity of Cromwell's statement made just before he died, he nominally, at least maintained his profession as a Catholic. But whatever his private religion was, it had little influence

-----  
66 Cal. V, 248.

67 Merriman, I, 101.

68 Cal. XIV, 4000, 4688.

69 Ibid, XV, 306, 429.

70 Newman, II, 260.

upon his character or actions.

As the year 1532 came to a close, it became evident that the rift between Henry and the Pope was to lead to a complete break. In January, 1533, the King was secretly married to Anne Boleyn, and the 10th of May, Thomas Cranmer, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, opened his archiepiscopal court at Dunstable.<sup>71</sup> The King's "great matter" was quickly dealt with, and the long awaited Divorce was granted. This was the signal for Thomas Cromwell to step to the front of the stage. He was now "completely master of England, and wholly controlled and managed Henry himself."<sup>72</sup>

There can be little doubt that Cromwell gave efficient aid in hastening the verdict; but what is far more important, he took effective measures, even before it was rendered, to prevent its revocation. Parliament had been in session during the three months previous to the assembling of the court at Dunstable; in anticipation of the coming sentence, it had been induced to pass an Act to deprive Katherine of the only hope that remained to her by forbidding appeals to Rome, and by ordaining that the decision of an archiepiscopal court should be final, except in cases where the King was concerned, when appeal might be made to the Upper House of Convocation.<sup>73</sup>

The unfortunate Queen and her daughter, the Princess Mary, were exposed to numerous indignities. The Act of Succession bastardized the princess, in order that the offspring of Anne Boleyn might be pronounced the lawful heirs to the throne of the English kingdom. These insults drew

-----  
71 Cal. VI, 180, 461.

72 Belloc, Characters of the Reformation, 89

73 Cal. VI, 469, 496, 525-529.

strong protests from the friends and sympathizers of the unhappy Queen, but Henry, having finally broken away from Rome without harm resulting to him or his kingdom, was not only utterly indifferent to the appeals made to him, but indicated that from this time on he would go his own way. Chapuys attempted to intercede in behalf of Katherine and Mary, but he could not gain access to the King. Finally he turned to Cromwell, having discovered at last, with surprise and mortification that he was the man who now managed all the King's affairs.<sup>74</sup> Cromwell, however, was evasive and untruthful,<sup>75</sup> and although Chapuys threatened that the Emperor and Francis I might unite against King Henry, little good resulted from the conversations. The Queen and her daughter continued to be treated with increasing disrespect, while Henry, under Cromwell's direction, prepared to take the next step towards the final subjugation of the Church.

Before leaving the subject of Katherine and the Divorce, we must say something about the suspicions connected with the death of the Queen, which occurred on January 7, 1536. In November of 1535, Henry had made his desire known to the inner circle of his advisers that at the next Parliament Katherine and the princess must be disposed of.<sup>76</sup> When, therefore, the Queen died, foul play was suspected, and Chapuys

---

<sup>74</sup> Cal. VI, 465, 508, 918, etc.

<sup>75</sup> Merriman, I, 217.

<sup>76</sup> Friedmann, II, 169-173.

claimed that his knowledge of the King's pronouncement and other evidence he possessed justified him in believing that Katherine had been poisoned. He charged that in August, 1534, Cromwell had dropped a "sinister hint" ( avancé sinistrement ) in his presence.<sup>77</sup> Merriman seems inclined to agree with the Imperial ambassador, and his opinions on this matter are deserving of consideration:

Nor did Henry's unseemly conduct when he received the news of the death of his first wife escape the notice of the Imperial ambassador. Chapuys wrote to Charles how the King clothed himself in yellow from head to foot, and spent the day in mirth and revelry. 'God be praised,' Henry had exclaimed, 'that we are free from all suspicion of war.' The ambassador also dwelt at length on the suspicious secrecy almost indecent haste with which the body of the Queen was opened, embalmed, and enclosed in lead; on the very significant testimony extracted from the chandler of the house who did the work, and on the statements of the doctor and of the Queen's confessor. The verdict of the best modern authorities on the post-mortem examination as reported by the shandler strongly favors the conclusion that Katherine was not poisoned, but died of ... cancer of the heart: the testimony of a sixteenth-century artisan, however, is but a poor basis for a modern scientific investigation. If the Queen was murdered, there is every reason to think that Cromwell was chiefly responsible for the crime. To a man of his character and training such a step would have been far less repugnant than to Henry, had he once assured himself that it was indispensable to his purposes. He had had sufficient experience of the Italy of Alexander VI and Caesar Borgia to render him quite callous to the ordinary sentiments of humanity in such matters. He had never fully realised the innate strength of England's isolated position; he was always alarmed by the danger of foreign invasion far more than his master, and consequently was more ready to adopt desperate measures to avert it. It does not seem likely that

<sup>77</sup> -----  
Cal. IX, 776; X, 59, 141. Also Friedmann, II, 176.

-204-

the more experienced Henry would have originated the plan of murdering his wife, until the crisis in foreign affairs had become more acute. Though he fully comprehended the many advantages of a closer alliance with Charles, he must have been reasonably certain that he had little cause to fear a direct attack in the immediate future, especially as the death of the Duke of Milan in the end of October had opened glorious possibilities for a renewal of the quarrel between Francis and Charles. Of course it is mere folly to suppose that Cromwell would have attempted to murder the Queen without the King's consent. It is more than probable, however, that - if poison it was - it was he who put the idea into Henry's mind, and took the responsibility for execution upon himself. <sup>78</sup>

There can, of course, be no question about the fact that Katherine's death - whether natural or murder - was very convenient for Henry and Cromwell. It made possible negotiations between the Emperor and Henry, and England's position as holder of the balance of power was strengthened. The King and his minister were now in a position to play France and Spain against each other as rivals on the Continent. But, what was more important, they were now in possession of a security that enabled them to prosecute at home those schemes that were to establish the absolute supremacy of the King in every department of English life.

Returning now to 1533, it is significant to note that in the beginning of this year the party of Cromwell and Anne had been still further strengthened. Sir Thomas Audley, who had shown himself an obedient and faithful servant of the King, was rewarded by being raised on January 26 to the

position of Lord Chancellor. Cromwell himself took over the leadership of political life as well as the next step for enriching and establishing Henry as supreme ruler.

Those who showed themselves lax or hostile to the Divorce were so constantly watched by Cromwell's agents that they dared not stir. It was about this time that the secretary began to organize a formidable system of espionage by which he afterwards made himself so terrible.<sup>79</sup>

That Henry's success thus far had been due to the skillful manipulations of Cromwell may be seen in the sudden and notable increase in his rewards from this time on. In April, 1533, he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, and in 1534 displaced Gardiner as Secretary to the King. The same year saw him appointed Master of the Rolls, and January of 1535, though a layman, he was exalted to the position of Vicar-general and Visitor-general of all the religious houses. The following year he was made Lord Privy Seal, and Vice-regent of the King in Spirituals, and in 1537 became a Knight of the Garter and a Peer of the Realm, with the title of Earl of Essex. About the same time this ecclesiastical layman was made Dean of Wells and provided with several other benefices. Thus Cardinal Gasquet observes:

The position occupied by Thomas Cromwell during the years of his power is unique in English history. As vice-regent and vicar-general he was placed above the archbishops and bishops, even in Convocation, and other strictly ecclesiastical assemblies. Hardly was the venerable Fisher executed, than he was elected his successor as chancellor of the University

-----  
<sup>79</sup> Friedmann, I, 187.

of Cambridge. In Parliament, he took precedence of the nobility of every rank by virtue of his ecclesiastical title of king's vicar-general. Armed, as he was, with supreme and absolute power, both civil and spiritual, he succeeded in establishing and maintaining in England a complete reign of terror ... It is by no means easy to realise the completeness of the autocratic power which was placed by the king in Cromwell's hands at this time, and which he used unscrupulously to crush all opposition to his schemes, for the overthrow of the Church, and the seizure of its revenues.<sup>80</sup>

In 1534 appeared the Act of Supremacy, enacted by a Parliament subservient to the King. It read:

The king our sovereign lord, his heirs and successors, kings of this realm, should be taken, accepted, and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England ... and shall have and enjoy, annexed and united to the imperial crown of this realm, as well the title and style thereof, as all honors, dignities, pre-eminences, jurisdictions, privileges, authorities, immunities, profits, and commodities to the said dignity of the supreme head of the same Church belonging and pertaining; that our said sovereign lord, his heir and successors ... shall have full authority and power from time to time to visit, refer, redress, reform, order, correct, restrain, and amend all such errors, heresies, abuses, offences, contempt, enormities, whatsoever they be, which by any spiritual authority and jurisdiction ought or may lawfully be reformed, . . . any usage, custom, foreign authority, prescriptions, or any other thing or things to the contrary notwithstanding.

This act is further so defined as to give to the King absolute ecclesiastical authority, alike in matters external ( church order, revenues, bestowing of benefices, etc.), and in matters internal ( the repression of false doctrine and and the promotion of the true, etc.).<sup>81</sup>

The stage was now set for the last phase of the conflict

---

<sup>80</sup> Henry VIII, 141.

<sup>81</sup> Newman, II. 258.

between Henry and the Pope, and Cromwell "pushed through the final steps of the schism."<sup>82</sup> Still there was no voice from Rome pronouncing an interdict, and with increasing boldness the King and his minister turned to the task of dissolving the monasteries. We quote Lingard on this point:

Cromwell had long ago promised that the assumption of the supremacy would place the wealth of the clerical and monastic bodies at the mercy of the crown. Hence the minister, encouraged by the success of his former counsels, ventured to propose the dissolution of the monasteries, and the motion was received with welcome by the king and Cranmer, whose approbation of the new doctrines taught him to seek the ruin of those establishments which proved the firmest supports of the ancient faith. A general visitation of the monasteries was therefore enjoined. The instructions which the visitors received breathed a spirit of piety and reformation, and were formed on the model of those formerly used in episcopal and legatine visitations; so that to men not entrusted with the secret, the object of Henry appeared, not the abolition, but the support and improvement of the monastic institution. A statement was compiled and laid before parliament, which, while it allotted the praise of regularity to the greater monasteries, described the lessopulent as abandoned to sloth and immorality. A bill was introduced and hurried, though not without opposition, through the two houses, giving to the king and his heirs all monastic establishments the clear yearly value of which did not exceed two hundred pounds.<sup>83</sup>

Chapuy's had written to the Emperor just before this bill was passed that "the king is very covetous of the goods of the Church, which he already considers as his patrimony."<sup>84</sup> He says that the new measures had been

---

<sup>82</sup> Belloc, Characters of the Reformation, 88.

<sup>83</sup> History of England, 353

<sup>84</sup> Cal. VII, 171.



brought about "to the great regret of good men, who were in a minority." The Lords had been obliged, "owing to the threats and practices of the king," to ratify these enactments of the lower house. While Parliament was in session, the pulpits were strictly guarded and watched, and the Easter sermons were directed as far as could be against the Pope and his authority.<sup>85</sup>

By the middle of 1535 commissioners had been appointed and were travelling over the whole of England, administering the oath of supremacy to the members of the religious orders. It is a matter for great surprise to find how universally this was taken, and we are inclined to doubt that many of the orders were animated with the religious zeal that had formerly characterized them. Cromwell took advantage of Parliament's omission to provide a form of oath, and made the oath as stringent as possible, hoping, say Gasquet, to drive the religious to resistance, in order to give a pretext for confiscating their monasteries.<sup>86</sup> Two important documents had armed him with authority. The first was a royal commission to Cromwell, authorising him as the King's vicar-general to undertake a general visitation of churches, monasteries, and clergy, and to appoint others as his deputies. The second consisted of a series of formal inquiries to be made concerning the state of the religious

---

<sup>85</sup> Cal. VII, 373.

<sup>86</sup> Gasquet, Henry VIII, 76.

houses, and royal injunctions for their reform. The latter is written in a strange hand, copiously interlined and corrected by the King's minister himself.

The two chief reasons for attacking the monasteries were, first, the wealth that might be gained from so doing, and, second, the fact that they were the strongholds of papal influence in the land. Acquiring such wealth and destroying such influence ministered very definitely to the creation of a unique and powerful Kingship. Cranmer might have been interested in the moral and spiritual values said to be at stake, but it is hard to be other than skeptical about the sincerity of Henry or Cromwell in their professed desire for reform.

It does not come within the scope of this treatise to examine the truth or falsehood of the charges made against the monastic orders. That there were abuses cannot be denied. No doubt many houses had become lax in their discipline, and had lost their primitive fervor.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, it is impossible to pretend that the investigations were conducted with any degree of fairness, or that the agents were honest and truthful men. "We have no reason indeed," writes Gairdner, "to think highly of the character of Cromwell's visitors; and the letters of Layton show that he really gloated over the obscenities he unearthed." <sup>88</sup>

-----  
<sup>87</sup> Gasquet, 7.

<sup>88</sup> Cal. X, Pref. xliii.

Layton, Legh, and Ap Rice are hardly a charming trio, nor is their Comperta Monastica a very chaste or trustworthy record. They were determined to find cause for dissolving as many monasteries as they could, so that confiscated revenues might flow in the royal treasury.

In March, 1536, another act of Parliament gave to the King power to deal with the possessions of all monasteries having an income of less than two hundred pounds a year. In order to deal with the land and moveables that now began to come into the King's possession, a "Court of Augmentations" was created. It consisted of a chancellor, treasurer, solicitor, and thirty subordinates. As might be supposed, Cromwell's friends and hirelings were the chief members of it.<sup>89</sup> The following month commissions were sent to the principal men in every county, authorising them to inquire further into the state of each house, to make inventories and estimates of monastic property, and to ascertain the number of monks who desired either to be transferred to another monastery or to be freed to enter secular life.<sup>90</sup> "It is significant that the reports of these men, concerning the character and morality of the inmates, are uniformly of a more favourable description than those of Layton and Legh."<sup>91</sup>

-----  
<sup>89</sup> Merriman, I, 170.

<sup>90</sup> Cal. X, 1191.

<sup>91</sup> Merriman, I, 171.

Cromwell's attack upon the Church did not go unchallenged. Great and good men opposed him, among whom were Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More. The Franciscan observants refused to take the oath of supremacy. Cromwell brought pressure to bear upon them, first in their monastery at Greenwich, then later in all of their seven houses in England; but most of the monks resisted. Exasperated, he finally suppressed them, drove them from their monasteries, and placed some of them in chains in other monasteries or in prison. About two hundred of them were thus cast adrift, some being permitted to go to France, Scotland, or Ireland.<sup>92</sup> Friar Forest of Greenwich was burned on a gallows in May, 1538.

In 1537, following a parliamentary investigation of the results of the visitation, the first Act of Dissolution was passed, affecting only the lesser monasteries. Few indeed were the voices now raised in protest. The saintly Fisher and the cultivated More were gone, their heads having been struck off in the summer of 1535. Cromwell had triumphed, and the King was making the most of his opportunity to despoil and cripple the Church. And although public opinion on the Continent had finally forced the Pope to pronounce the sentence of excommunication against Henry in the summer of 1534, no rebellion had lifted itself in all the realm of England. By the time the bull laying the kingdom under interdict had been pro-

-----  
<sup>92</sup> Cal. VII, 49, 1057. Cf. Gasquet, 77.

nounced(1538), it was too late. The Court of the Star Chamber, representing the absolute civil and ecclesiastical power of the King,had become in Cromwell's hands, a terror to England. Hundreds of the greatest and noblest men and women in the land had become his victims,<sup>93</sup> and the Church had, for the time being at least, become powerless to resist.

The first Act of Dissolution was,of course, not well received by the people in general, and in the Autumn of 1537 a revolt broke out in Lincolnshire,followed soon after by the Pilgrimage of Grace. This organised Yorkshire insurrection was a serious threat at first, but Cromwell and the King finally overcame it by means of threats and promises. Cromwell discovered certain abbots and priors to be more or less implicated, and now turned on the monasteries that remained. Some highly placed churchmen were hanged,and the King's minister demanded a second Act of Dissolution to prevent further treason.<sup>94</sup> The time for the final blow had come. In the spring of 1539,a new statute providing for the dissolution of all monasteries passed Parliament, and a reign of terror fell upon the monks and nuns throughout the realm. Even the houses of the friars were now investigated and suppressed.<sup>95</sup> King and minister stood triumphant and absolute. Within five years of the first visitation the work of despoiling and crippling the Church was completed.

---

<sup>93</sup> Newman, II, 259.

<sup>94</sup> Innes, Ten Tudor Statesmen, 144.

<sup>95</sup> Cal. XIII, 225.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We have in outline traced the progress of a revolution as remarkable as any in all history. Within the limits of a single decade, and chiefly through the personal influence of one man, the traditions of a long-established nation were overturned, and innovations of the most startling, far-reaching and permanent nature were thrust upon a people who had not even expected them, let alone wished them. Cromwell "was the first chief minister that England ever had ,who was base-born and yet not a cleric," yet he produced more change in the religious life of a people than perhaps any other in English history. He made himself indispensable to a perplexed, yet arrogant monarch, and almost overnight transformed the King's hesitancy to decision. He deliberately rejected the policies of his predecessor, and succeeded where Wolsey had failed. Cautious, far-seeing, always seeking to cloak his schemes under cover of constitutional reform, he could nevertheless be bold even to recklessness. "His was the mind that first conceived the idea of attacking the papal power in its strongholds, and procuring thereby the wealth to gratify the covetousness of the king," and his was the hand that guided each movement in the execution of the work. The suddenness with which Henry VIII changed his attitude towards the Divorce question, the papal supremacy, and the use of Parliament, as soon as he had received Cromwell into

his service argues that if this sinister genius had not come into his life the English Reformation would have followed a different course.

He obtained the support of the King in almost every measure he invented, and then forced Parliament formally to legalize it. His actions were always carefully planned, and he kept before him one goal - the supremacy of the King. He did this because he believed it to be the only way in which a nation could be made strong. He sought political safety, and he was prepared to use any means to achieve it. He was never swayed by emotion, cared little for moral or religious scruples, and if such a term is possible, might be called a "honest Machiavellian." Therefore "out of moves first made to attain and ensure questionable ends, grew consequences so great and far-reaching that it is only with difficulty that one can trace their origin."

He brought to his task as King's minister a mind and energy as tireless as varied. He seemed never to pause, but as fast as one step of a plan was completed, he moved steadily into the next. He bore down opposition by the sheer force of an inflexible will, as he cut a swath through the customary usages that Henry VIII might follow. "It was not alone in Parliament, Convocation, or Privy Council that he reigned supreme; on every department of the government service the stamp of his individual genius remains indelibly fixed. The permanence of his work was largely due to

the way in which he clinched every reform which he introduced."<sup>96</sup> It is perhaps not too much to call the years from 1530 to 1540 the "Cromwellian Decade." Certainly it is difficult to imagine the accomplishments of those years without Thomas Cromwell. It is doubtful that Henry VIII would have conceived or executed the daring moves that produced the break with Rome without the remarkable influence of the "Hammer of the Monks."

-----

<sup>96</sup> Merriman, I, 305.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Blunt, John Henry, The Reformation of the Church of England 2 vols. London, 1885.
- Burnet, Gilbert, The History of the Reformation of the Church of England.
- Busch, Wilhelm, England under the Tudors. English translation by Alice M. Todd. vol.I, 1895.
- Campbell, John, Lord, The Lives of the Lord Chancellors and Keepers of the Great Seal of England. 3 vols. London, 1846.
- Cavendish, George, The Life of Cardinal Wolsey, London, 1852.
- Creighton, Mandell, Cardinal Wolsey, London, 1898.
- Belloc, Hilaire, How the Reformation Happened. New York, 1928.  
Characters of the Reformation. London, 1936.
- Davies-Wyatt, E. History of England. London, 1921
- Dictionary of National Biography, Edd. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Lee. 63 vols. 1885 -1900. vol. V.
- Ellis, James J. Thomas Cromwell (Menwith a Mission series) London, 1891.
- Friedmann, Paul, Anne Boleyn, 1527-1536. 2 vols. London, 1884.
- Foxe, John, Ecclesiastical History London, 1684.
- Froude, J.A. History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Death of Elizabeth. 12 vols. New York, 1868.  
The Divorce of Catherine of Aragon, 1891
- Gairdner, James, The Age of Anne Boleyn; Mary and Anne Boleyn. (English Historical Review, vols. VIII and X). London, 1893 and 1895.  
Henry VIII (Cambridge Medieval History) vol.II. New York and Cambridge, 1934.
- Gasquet, Francis, A. Henry VIII and the English Monasteries.
- Hall, Edward, Chronicle. London, 1809.

Hallam, Henry, The Constitutional History of England. 3 vols. London, 1897.

Holinshed, Ralph. Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland. 6 vols. London, 1808.

Innes, Arthur Donald, England under the Tudors  
Ten Tudor Statesmen, London, 1906.

Lingard, John, A History of England, 14 vols. 1825

Merriman, R. B. Life and Letters of Thomas Cromwell, 2 vols. Oxford, 1902.

Original Letters Illustrative of English History, Ed. Sir Henry Ellis, London, 1827-1846.

Phillips, John, The Cromwell Family, Antiquary, vol.II, London, 1880.

The Cromwells of Putney. Antiquarian Magazine and Bibliographer, vol.II, London, 1882.

Phillips, Thomas, The History of the Life of Reginald Pole, Oxford, 1764.

Pole, Reginald, Apologia ad Carolum Quintum. Epistolarum, pars I. Brescia, 1744.

Stow John, A Survey of London. London, 1603.

Strype, John, Ecclesiastical Memorials, 3 vols. Oxford, 1822.

Stubbs, William, The Constitutional History of England. 3 vols. Oxford, 1897.

Wordsworth, Christopher, Cromwell, Earl of Essex. ( vol.II of Ecclesiastical Biography). London, 1818.